

District 25 News

MAKIKI, TANTALUS, MCCULLY, PAPA KOLEA

FEBRUARY 2008



Dear Friends & Neighbors,

Kung Hee Fat Choy! I hope that the Year of the Rat will be a joyous and prosperous year for you and your family.

As you know, the 2008 Legislative Session has begun. We need to budget wisely and focus on issues that reflect the sentiment of the community and the people of Hawaii. To this end, I have

included a community survey with this newsletter. Please take the time to fill out this survey to help guide me in my decision-making process this session.

Please also join me and other neighbors on Saturday, March 1st at Makiki District Park for a Community Clean-Up. We will be painting over graffiti that marks the Park's tennis courts, buildings, and parking areas from 8 am-12 noon.

I am looking forward to an exciting and productive session with topics such as health care and good government reforms on the agenda. Should you have any questions or need my assistance, please don't hesitate to contact me at 586-9425 or e-mail me at repbelatti@capitol.hawaii.gov.

Mahalo pumehana,

Della Au Belatti
State Representative, District 25

The Shortlist

COFFEE TALK

Coffee Talk is an open forum for district residents to talk with Rep. Belatti about what's going on in our neighborhood and at the Legislature.

Please come share your concerns and ideas about the issues that are important to you.

The following Coffee Talk events are scheduled for the respective community residents listed:

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27
1717 Mott-Smith, Pavilion @ 6:00pm

MONDAY, MARCH 3
Kalawahine Community,
Mauka Park @ 6:00pm

MONDAY, APRIL 7
Arcadia Retirement Residence,
The Chapel @ 10:00am

MAKIKI DISTRICT PARK CLEANUP & PAINT-OUT

Saturday, March 1
8:00am-12 noon

Rep. Belatti invites you to a cleanup where we will be painting over graffiti at Makiki District Park, picking up trash, and cleaning up nearby bus stops. A pot luck lunch will be coordinated for the cleanup. Please contact our cleanup coordinator, Francis Choe, at 586-9425 if you need more information or would like to volunteer.

Community Survey

From Your Neighbor: 2008 Community Survey Your comments will help guide Rep. Belatti as issues are considered during the 2008 legislative session. Your address is optional, but we will send responses only to those who provide their mailing address.	
EDUCATION Many states are establishing publicly funded pre-school programs so that all 4-year-olds can participate. How important is it for Hawaii to do the same? <input type="checkbox"/> Very important <input type="checkbox"/> Important	Do you believe that all new state buildings should be built "green" by using photovoltaic energy consumption or using "green" technology to cool buildings? <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly favor

Where Do You Stand On the Issues?

Voice your thoughts on the issues that are important to our district and our state in *District 25 News'* legislative survey.

Long-Term Caregivers

Proposed Tax Incentives for Family Caregivers

By KERIANNE PASCUA

Family caregivers are an often unacknowledged, but important part of our long-term healthcare system in Hawaii, providing love and care while balancing other family and workplace responsibilities. Kerianne presents a few of the legislature's Caregiver Tax Credits that seek to lessen the financial hardships that often accompany care responsibilities.

Ethics Reform

A Few Simple Changes

By DELLA AU BELATTI

This year, legislators from both parties have posed solutions ranging from opening a discussion on how to develop a better Grants-in-Aid system to bills that would enact systemic changes.

Della proposes a few simple changes to the much discussed Grants-in-Aid selection process conducted by the Legislature.

Tax Incentive Legislation Focuses on the Growing Caregiver Population

By KERIANNE PASCUA

By 2020, more than one in four individuals will be sixty or older. With the growing elderly population in Hawaii, family members and friends are now finding new careers in caregiving. Many adult children experience role reversal as they begin to care for their parents. Approximately 25% of Hawaii's households contain at least one individual caring for adults over sixty and more than 17% of caregivers are also raising their grandchildren.

In its 2007 report to the Legislature, the Joint Legislative Committee considered the comprehensive, statewide family caregiver needs assessment conducted by the Executive Office on Aging. With rising healthcare costs, growing demand for long-term care facilities, and a shortage in healthcare providers, the Joint Committee concluded that Hawaii's caregivers need access to more affordable services and financial assistance.

This session, legislators hope to alleviate some of the financial burdens that many caregivers face. House Bills 2113, 2197, 2620 and Senate

HAWAII'S CAREGIVERS

Family caregivers are family members, friends, and neighbors who provide unpaid assistance to those over the age of sixty or are grandparents raising their grandchildren.

- Average hours of caregiving: 20 hours per week.
- More than 53% of caregivers earn less than \$35,000 annually.
- 58% of caregivers are employed, with about 78% of the employed caregivers working full time.

Source: Family Needs Assessment conducted by the Executive Office on Aging, reported in the Joint Legislative Committee Report No. 1 (Dec. 2007)

Bill 2049, were introduced this session to provide a tax credit to caregivers who care for qualified recipients. Qualified recipients are those

who are sixty years of age or older, are a citizen or resident alien of the United States, and require substantial supervision or assistance with essential activities. Caregivers who meet the criteria set forth by these bills would be eligible for a maximum of \$1,000 credit towards their state income tax.

House Bill 2200, another tax measure, would establish an income tax credit for caregivers who modify their home to increase accessibility for individuals with disabilities or special needs. Many homes in Hawaii are not equipped with safety and accessibility measures necessary when caring for the elderly or disabled at home. This bill would help to reduce some of the economic hardships and allow our elderly population to live healthier and happier lives at home with their family and friends.

Kerianne is a member of Representative Belatti's session staff. As a registered nurse, Kerianne is helping Representative Belatti to track the family caregiving measures this session. If you have any questions regarding family caregiving or any other health legislation, please contact Kerianne at 586-9425 or belatti4@capitol.hawaii.gov.

The Perfect Storm: The Forces Shaping Hawaii's Approaching Healthcare Crisis

A couple of years ago, the Healthcare Association of Hawaii (HAH) developed *A Perfect Storm*, an informational pamphlet that pointed the public to the coming healthcare crisis. In it, HAH identified several economic factors that have long been coming together to form the inevitable collapse of Hawaii's healthcare industry:

- Federal regulations add to operating costs
 - Low Medicare and Medicaid payments
 - The high cost of long-term care
 - Rising charity care and bad debt
- None of these factors have the



The phrase **perfect storm** refers to the simultaneous occurrence of events which, taken individually, would be far less powerful than the result of their chance combination. Such occurrences are rare by their very nature, so that even a slight change in any one event contributing to the perfect storm would lessen its overall impact.

Source: "Perfect storm." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. 12 February 2008 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perfect_storm>

influence or gravity to shutdown our healthcare system on its own, however together they form the unique convergence of elements that only

its combination can create the most perfect and destructive storm. Hawaii's hospitals, nursing homes, and hospices cannot continue to provide the same quality of care and services without some financial relief.

HAH urges people to become aware of the state of Hawaii's healthcare, the economic challenges facing it, and how it's situation will affect the people it currently serves.

Healthcare Association of Hawaii is a non-profit organization that represents and advocates on behalf of Hawaii's people, healthcare providers, healthcare facilities, and the healthcare services they provide. For a free pamphlet, to learn the facts about Hawaii's impending healthcare crisis, or to find out what you can do next, contact HAH at 521-8961 or visit www.hah.org.

Few Simple Changes Can Improve Grants Process

Commentary By DELLA AU BELATTI

Transparency, accountability, and openness should be more than just words that elected officials pay lip service to. Reporter Rob Perez recently published a series of articles that exposed a Grants-in-Aid (GIA) award process that is shrouded in secrecy, is conducted behind closed doors, and lacks any formal criteria. The Legislature must bring this process out of the shadows and explain to the public why and how GIAs are awarded to non-profit organizations that are serving important needs.

The Legislature must take action on this issue. Legislators from both parties have posed solutions ranging from opening a discussion on how to develop a better GIA system to bills that would enact systemic changes. On Opening Day, Republican House Minority Leader Lynn Finnegan spoke about convening a GIA forum with experts from the University of Hawaii to develop procedures that will ensure a better system.

The Legislature must bring this process out of the shadows and explain to the public why and how GIAs are awarded to non-profit organizations that are serving important needs.

Other legislators have introduced bills that target the more troublesome areas of the GIA process. Senate Bill 2615, introduced by Democratic Senator Les Ihara, proposes that the Legislature disclose the criteria and guidelines used to select grant recipients. House Bill 2743, introduced by Republican Representative Colleen Meyer, suggests adoption of a 72-hour waiting period between introduction of appropriation or revenue bills and a hearing or vote on these bills. This waiting period will afford the public more time to review and comment on proposed budget measures.

I stand with all of my colleagues, Democrats and Republicans, who will work towards developing a more transparent and open process that will result in a government that is accountable to all of the people of Hawaii.

The overhaul of the GIA process, however, must happen now - not next session or several years from now. The House has already taken the immediate steps of abolishing the single-member GIA Subcommittee. Finance Committee Chair Marcus Oshiro has also announced that applicants will be asked to present an overview of their request and be available for questions. While this

is progress, it is not enough. In the next two weeks, the legislature can take the following commonsense steps to achieve greater transparency and openness:

- 1) *Grants-in-Aid Applicant List Made Available to All:*
All Finance Committee members, at the very least, should be provided a list of all the GIA requests that includes the non-profit organization making the request, a brief description of the project to be funded, the amount requested, the amounts the project receives from other sources, whether the group has received grants from the State in the past, and the amount received in the past.
- 2) *Public Meeting to Discuss Criteria and Guidelines:*
After members of the Finance Committee have had the opportunity to review the list for at least 48 hours, the Finance Committee should hold a public meeting to discuss criteria and guidelines that will shape the House proposal for GIAs.
- 3) *Proposed House Grants-in-Aid List:*
Following this first meeting and recognizing that the committee organization of the House relies on the guidance of Chairpersons, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee should provide a proposed list of the Grants-in-Aid to the members of the Finance Committee.
- 4) *Public Votes on the House Grants-in-Aid List:*
After being able to review the list for at least 48 hours, the Finance Committee should then hold a second public decision-making meeting to discuss the proposed list and to publicly vote on the list and its inclusion in the House Budget Bill. The House Budget Bill, with the House grants, will then be considered by the House as a whole before it crosses over to the Senate for their consideration.

Critics of these four simple steps pose a number of arguments: the information about the requests are already available; it is impractical to conduct public meetings in a tight legislative calendar; it is too early in the budget-making process for the House to determine if or what monies will be available for GIAs; and that issuing an initial list of proposed GIAs would have a negative impact on any non-profit organization not included on this list.

Continued on page 4

Ethics Reform *continued from page 3*

These criticisms are easily countered. First, although the information on requests are available, transparency and accountability is not achieved by simply revealing who is applying for a grant. Instead, information produced in a usable format for decision-makers provides a tool for prioritization, further analysis, and better decision-making. It also serves as a way for the public to assess the process used by legislators.

Second, the approach I have suggested, two public hearings that involve a public discussion by members about the criteria and guidelines to be applied and a proposed list, can be less time-consuming (if managed properly) and more insightful into the process of identifying GIA recipients than the House's current proposal to require every applicant to present a review of their request.

Third, identifying top priorities and planning early is the most sensible approach to creating any budget. For those who believe it is too early in the budget-making process to know what monies are available to craft a complete GIA list, the House Finance Committee can look to the past for guidance as to how much money might be available, and then conservatively propose and vote on a list that is substantially lower than the average amount that has been awarded in the past. This process will compel legislators to identify the most critical needs and most deserving projects, and leave room for adding or subtracting GIAs as the budget is negotiated and discussed by the Senate and, later, the Joint House and Senate Conference Committee.

Fourth, any non-profit that is not included on the proposed list will not be happy, however, providing more information earlier in the process would allow groups to

redirect their lobbying and overall fundraising efforts. Knowing whether or not they had made an initial list, GIA applicants would be able to refocus their efforts on educating more legislators about the public purposes served by their projects, gather or ensure support for their application, and invest time in developing other funding sources.

Simple modifications to the process, like the ones I have outlined, can ensure that GIA process is conducted with integrity. In his Opening Day speech, Speaker Calvin Say urged that we must "open up our institutions, our committees and our boardrooms, to provide . . . access to leadership [that] young people deserve." Taking this obligation one step further, all of the people of Hawaii deserve an open-door policy to how and why decisions are made by our public leaders.

This commentary was written for and published by The Honolulu Advertiser on Sunday, February 10, 2008.

A Citizen's Guide to the Legislative Process

Throughout the legislative session, *District 25 News* will be presenting legislative bills that are being considered by the Hawaii State Legislature. In order to help interested citizens become familiar with our legislative process, *District 25 News* has included in this issue two excerpts from the *Abridged Citizen's Guide to Participation in the Legislative Process*, a helpful citizen's guide developed by staff offices at the Legislature.

Although the *Abridged Guide* is compact, it contains a wealth of relevant information. It includes, among other things, an overview of the legislative process, the legislative timetable, testimony guidelines, committee information, contact information for legislators, and resource center information. Knowledge and effective, timely communication are keys to successful par-



ticipation in the legislative process and essential to the preservation of our way of government.

To obtain an electronic copy of the *Abridged Citizen's Guide* visit the Hawaii State Legislature website at www.capitol.hawaii.gov and do a search for the "abridged citizen guide", or contact our office at 586-9425 to request a print version.

How can I get information on the status of a bill or resolution?

To obtain online information on the status of measures, go to the Capitol website at: www.capitol.hawaii.gov and click on "Bill Status & Docs" and follow the directions provided. If you don't know the bill number you can find it using a "text search."

If you know the measure's committee referral you may wish to contact the committee chair's office. You



may also contact your district representative or senator, the House Chief Clerk's Office for House measures (586-6400), or the Senate Chief Clerk's Office for Senate measures (586-6720). You may also call the Public Access Room.

How do I submit testimony for a public hearing?

For the House, testimony should be delivered to the committee vice-chair's office or faxed to the number provided on the committee's hearing notice. Testimony can also be emailed to the lead committee's email address.

For the Senate, testimony should be delivered to the committee chair's office. Testimony may also be emailed to Testimony@capitol.hawaii.gov or it may be faxed to 586-6659 (Neighbor Islands: 1-800-586-6659).

Written or email testimony should be submitted at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled hearing even if you plan to attend.

From Your Neighbor: 2008 Community Survey

Your comments will help guide Rep. Belatti as issues are considered during the 2008 legislative session. Your name and address are optional, but we will send responses only to those who provide their mailing information.

EDUCATION

Many states are establishing publicly funded pre-school programs so that all 4-year-olds can participate. How important is it for Hawaii to do the same?

- Very important
- Important
- Not very important
- Not important
- No opinion

Much press has been given to the condition of UH facilities in recent weeks. Do you support additional funding for the University of Hawaii facilities?

- Strongly favor
- Somewhat favor
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose
- No opinion

Some high schools in Hawaii are creating smaller learning communities that focus on various fields such as construction, science, engineering and math. Do you support making geographical exceptions easier so students can have choices on where to go?

- Strongly favor
- Somewhat favor
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose
- No opinion

With the cost of college quickly climbing, saving for college has become an increasingly important concern for parents. Would you support a tax incentive or deduction program for parents that participate in a college savings program, like HI-529?

- Strongly favor
- Somewhat favor
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose
- No opinion

ENVIRONMENT

With cost of gasoline ever escalating and concerns of global warming and energy security, do you support higher vehicle taxes for cars that have low miles-per-gallon/high fuel consumption?

- Strongly favor
- Somewhat favor
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose
- No opinion

Do you believe that all new state building should be built "green" by using photovoltaic cell to reduce energy consumption or using of "environmentally friendly" technology to cool buildings?

- Strongly favor
- Somewhat favor
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose
- No opinion

The use of electronic devices is essential to our daily lives and rapidly increasing technology renders our "older" devices obsolete in barely a year or two. Do you support legislation that would create a recycling program for electronic waste disposal?

- Strongly favor
- Somewhat favor
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose
- No opinion

Since its start, the HI 5¢ Bottle Redemption Program has been quite a success. Do you support providing excess funds generated by the program to county governments to facilitate the recycling programs in the respective counties?

- Strongly favor
- Somewhat favor
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose
- No opinion

